

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose

This document is intended to serve as an inventory of general and specific conditions and opportunities within the corridor and recommends a preferred streetscape approach for Sewell’s Point Road from the Five Points Intersection to Widgeon Road. In particular, this study was initiated to help link together several public projects and varying land uses in the area through a coordinated streetscape design. The City previously completed a demonstration streetscape project for a block in the business district and is in the process of constructing a new Norview High School and planning for a new community center. This plan seeks to evaluate these projects as they relate to the right-of-way and recommends a streetscape treatment that provides a transition from the commercial core to more residential and institutional sections of Sewell’s Point Road. The desired goal is to create a sense of place for Five Points that is more pedestrian friendly and neighborhood serving.

Background

The Five Points Community Streetscape Master Plan is the latest in a series of community driven planning efforts to stabilize and revitalize the Five Points communities and the Sewell’s Point Road business district. It builds upon recommendations from the 1998 Young Architects Study for revitalization and the 2000 Marketing Study for Five Points and Fairmount Park, which put forth broad initiatives for community improvement including streetscape development. It also acknowledges the findings of the Hampton Roads Planning District Traffic Study for the Five Points Intersection and takes into account that the City of Norfolk may restudy traffic in the intersection and north along Sewell’s Point Road in the future. And finally, the plan supports the Pedestrian Commercial Overlay District by establishing a safe and pedestrian friendly environment.

Public Participation/Focus Groups

The Five Points Community Streetscape Master Plan has been developed with an ongoing public participation element. A series of meetings and workshops have been held with input from the general public, area civic leagues, corridor business and property owners, the Five Points Task Force and the Five Points Partnership. Focus group meetings were also held with various City departments including the Departments of Public Works, City Planning, Norfolk Public Schools, Development, Neighborhood and Leisure Services, Hampton Roads Transit and Police. The purpose of these meetings was to establish goals and evaluate and prioritize alternatives. The following is a list of meetings held:



Public Participation and Focus Group Summary

- Kick-Off Meeting with City Departments: Departments of Public Works, City Planning, Norfolk Public Schools, Development, Neighborhood and Leisure Services, Hampton Roads Transit and Police - March 25, City Hall
- Pancake Breakfast and Kick-Off Meeting with Five Points Task Force - March 27, Norview United Methodist Church
- Workshop with Business Owners: Issues and Priorities - April 9, Norview Recreation Center
- Public Workshop: Issues and Priorities - April 10, Norview Recreation Center
- Project Displays at Farm Market Benefit Dinner - April 24, Masonic Lodge
- Norfolk Public Schools Meeting: Greenway Feasibility - June 20, Norfolk Public Schools
- Public Workshop: Preliminary Master Plan and Concepts - June 27, Norview Recreation Center
- Informal Open House: Preliminary Master Plan and Concepts - July 12, Community Farm Market
- City Department Workshop: Master Plan Presentation - August 20, City Hall
- Five Points Task Force Meeting: Master Plan Presentation - August 21, City Hall
- Design Review Committee: Master Plan Presentation - August 25, City Hall
- Planning Commission: Master Plan Presentation - August 28, City Hall
- Public Meeting: Master Plan Presentation - September 16, Norview Recreation Center



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Plan Overview

There are two primary types of deficiencies within the corridor that the master plan recognizes and addresses. Both categories influence the user’s perception of and ability to comfortably utilize the corridor. In the first category are functional deficiencies, such as traffic congestion and non-continuous sidewalks. In the second are aesthetic shortcomings, such as boarded or neglected properties and the visual clutter of overhead utilities.

Among the most significant functional constraints to creating a pedestrian friendly environment are the traffic congestion and volumes of through traffic on Sewell’s Point Road, particularly in the commercial core. The master plan calls for the evaluation and creation of a connector street that will channel through traffic off of Sewell’s Point Road and onto Chesapeake Boulevard in order to reduce congestion in the commercial core. The connector road will require a new signalized intersection, including signalized pedestrian crosswalks in the vicinity of the elementary school and community center. Additional on-street parking is provided in the commercial sector and cooperative off-street parking areas are recommended to provide easier access and clearly marked parking opportunities for patrons. Sidewalks and crosswalks will be upgraded to provide safer, continuous walkways throughout the corridor and a greenway with a multiple-use path for recreation is proposed to encircle the Norview High School, Middle School, Elementary School and Community Center. A combination of traffic calming measures such as raised intersections, sidewalk “knuckles,” and additional stop signs are intended to improve both pedestrian circulation and safety, and vehicular movement through the commercial core.

Throughout the corridor street trees, benches, pedestrian scale lights and related amenities will enhance the overall visual character of the area and serve as recognizable signatures for the Five Points community. Certain streetscape features such as custom designed bus shelters will incorporate a recognizable Five Points/Norview icon that can be used to by business associations, schools and neighborhood groups to reinforce the community’s distinct character and assets. Specific locations for public art projects have been identified and the corridor could serve as a pilot area for a percent for art program.

Zones

Three primary zones emerged with similar characteristics and specific opportunities for each.

Zone 1 - Commercial Core

Sewell’s Point Road from Five Points intersection to Greenwood Street
Norview Avenue from United Methodist Church to Sewell’s Point Road – North Side Only
Chesapeake Boulevard from Sewell’s Point Road to Greenwood Street – West Side Only

Although commercial uses may be found outside these limits, Zone 1 is traditionally considered the Five Points “Main Street” with a concentration of stores, restaurants, and entertainment venues. Currently the business offerings within the core are more limited and include the post office, community farmers market, grocery and retail stores, pawn shop, restaurants, a pool hall, taverns, night clubs, storefront churches and a number of underutilized buildings. Limited on-street and off-street parking opportunities in this area are a concern of residents and the business community. The most extensive sidewalk, roadway, parking and traffic calming improvements are recommended within this zone.

Zone 2 – Transitional

Greenwood Street roughly to Partridge Road
Characterized by a combination of automobile oriented businesses, single-family homes, apartment buildings, Norview Middle School and vacant parcels, this zone is not as dense or cohesive as the Commercial Core. There are however, redevelopment opportunities and the potential for extending Commercial Core treatments through this zone. At the northern end several alternatives are suggested for a new roadway to channel through traffic from Sewell’s Point Road to Chesapeake Boulevard with a new signalized intersection. This cross connector road will reduce the amount of traffic on Sewell’s Point Road, serve as a gateway into the community, and will include signalized pedestrian crosswalks at Chesapeake Boulevard.

Zone 3 – Community Campus

Partridge Road to Widgeon Road

This is the least commercial and most neighborhood oriented zone, with single family homes and a landscaped open space corridor on the west side and the elementary school and high school campuses and the existing and recreation center on the east side. Traffic is more free flowing and sidewalks are more continuous and in better condition. Proposed improvements in this area include a greenway linking the three schools with the community center and neighborhoods, opportunities for parking during special functions, and aesthetic features common among all corridor zones.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Related Efforts

Currently reconstruction of the Norview High School Building and Campus is underway with an estimated completion date of 2005. The existing Norview Recreation Center north of the current high school will be demolished as part of the campus development. Tentative plans have been made to establish a new community center on the grounds of the Norview Elementary School with a 2005/2006 construction schedule. Additional right of way is required to develop the center and property negotiations are underway for two parcels.

As of August 2003, pedestrian lighting is also currently being installed in the median between Partridge Road and Philpotts Road. Twenty-four Dominion Power “Traditional” model, lantern type lights are being installed along the existing sidewalk in response to neighborhood concerns.

The City of Norfolk desires to undertake an independent traffic study of the Five Points intersection to study use and develop alternative intersection configurations. Such a study was not included in the current Capital Improvement Plan, however Transportation Department representatives will pursue funding in coming years. Results could affect the roadway geometry at the Five Points Intersection. VDOT is currently implementing a plan for signage and pavement marking improvements in the vicinity of the intersection scheduled to be completed in 2004.

Funding and Priorities

The City’s Neighborhood Commercial Corridors fund is currently the only source of funding identified for projects within this master plan, although other sources may be allocated in the Capitol Improvement Plan in coming years. Based upon the construction schedules for Norview High School and Community Center, the greenway and related pedestrian crosswalks have been identified as an immediate opportunity and priority for funding, design and construction. By designing and installing the multiple use trail concurrently with the school construction, the City can show an immediate commitment to plan implementation. This also allows for a better integrated facility and avoids the need to retrofit new construction and prolong construction periods.

The community and other stakeholders voiced almost unanimous support for the traffic reduction/calming proposals recommended herein. However, the level of traffic analysis required to fully study the impacts of the proposed cross connection from Sewell’s Point Road to Chesapeake Boulevard could not be undertaken within the scope of this study. A traffic study should be funded and undertaken to evaluate the potential cross connection road, because some of the proposed traffic calming measures recommended for the commercial core are dependant upon or function more effectively by reducing traffic volumes on Sewell’s Point Road. Since a cross connector will impact traffic volumes on Chesapeake Boulevard, the traffic study should also include the Five Points Intersection.

If a recommendation to establish a cross connector road is carried forward in any subsequent traffic studies, the construction of the road and related streetscape features in Zone 2 will be the next logical funding priority. With through traffic on Sewell’s Point Road reduced with a cross connection, traffic calming and streetscape improvements in Zone 1 can commence with less disruption and a more straightforward maintenance of traffic plan. This conclusion should be evaluated further as part of the traffic study.